



NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 2, 2001

Stephanie Hanna (O) 202/501-4633

NATIONAL ACADEMY TO REVIEW SCIENTIFIC DECISIONS, NEEDS OF AQUATIC ENDANGERED SPECIES IN KLAMATH BASIN PROJECT

(WASHINGTON) - The Department of the Interior announced today it has signed an agreement with the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) to review scientific and technical information regarding aquatic endangered species conservation in the Klamath Basin.

"I believe we should base our decisions on the best available science," Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton said. "We hope that by seeking this independent review we can assure the many constituencies affected by the Klamath Basin Project that our decisions meet that standard."

The purpose of the NAS review will be to examine the underlying scientific information used by the Interior Department's Bureau of Reclamation and Fish and Wildlife Service and the Commerce Department's National Marine Fisheries Service to evaluate the effects of operations of the Klamath Project on aquatic species listed under the Endangered Species Act, particularly coho salmon and Lost River and short-nosed suckers. The Klamath Project, operated by the Bureau of Reclamation, is located in the Klamath River Basin of southern Oregon and northern California.

The NAS will consider hydrologic and other environmental parameters (including water quality and habitat availability) necessary for the listed species at critical times during their life cycles. The review will also evaluate probable consequences to these species when environmental parameters fall below these conditions. The NAS review will examine the scientific underpinnings of aquatic conditions necessary to recover and sustain these listed species.

The NAS will evaluate existing scientific information and review the way it was applied in developing the February 2001 biological assessments of the Bureau of Reclamation and April 2001 biological opinions of the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service.

The National Academy of Sciences will provide an interim report by January 31, 2002, and a final report by March 30, 2003. The review is being jointly funded by the Departments of the Interior and Commerce.

-DOI-